



# State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

---

## Homebound Instruction: A Question and Answer Document for School Districts

Revised October 2003

The Department of Public Instruction receives many inquiries from school districts regarding homebound instruction. This document will attempt to clarify a district's obligation to respond to these requests. **Please note that different standards apply to homebound instruction for special education students. This document does not address these standards.**

1. *Are school districts required to provide homebound instruction at parental request?*

Wisconsin Statute 118.15 (1)(d) lists a number of examples of curricular modifications parents can request. Homebound instruction is one example of the possible modifications listed in the statute. Districts must respond to these requests but are not obligated to provide them.

2. *What if the parent presents a prescription from a physician or other provider for homebound instruction? Doesn't this mean the district must provide it?*

No. Again, this simply means the district is required to consider the request. The school district has the statutory authority to determine the most appropriate educational program for a student.

3. *My district typically provides homebound instruction when students must miss school for an extended period due to a significant illness, surgery, or injury. Does this mean we have to provide it for all requests?*

No. A local school district has the authority to consider the individual circumstances surrounding each request, and respond as they feel is appropriate. However, services should be made available to students on an equitable basis.

4. *Are districts required to have a local policy to deal with these requests?*

No. However, a local policy may help to ensure that requests are being considered fairly in all schools across the district.

5. *How long does a local district have to respond to a parental request for homebound instruction?*

According to state statute, the local school board has 90 days in which to render its decision in writing. If the child has been evaluated by an Individual Education Program (IEP) team, and found not to be a child with a disability by that team, the Board then has 30 days to render this decision. Considering the short term and immediate nature of most homebound instruction requests, it would be most beneficial to the student's education to handle such requests on an expedited basis.

6. *What happens if a parent keeps their child home for an extended period of time even if the district does not provide homebound instruction?*

A child who is excused because they are "temporarily not in proper physical or mental condition to attend a school program, but who can be expected to return to a school program upon termination or abatement of the illness or condition" cannot be found to be truant or habitually truant.

7. *What if the school questions whether the child is truly unable to attend school?*

The school can request a statement to this effect from a physician, dentist, chiropractor, optometrist, psychologist, or Christian Science practitioner as proof of the condition of the child. This excuse shall state the time period for which it is valid, not to exceed 30 days.

8. *If a district does choose to provide homebound instruction, what are the requirements?*

There are no requirements as to the amount of time, time of day, or subjects covered. Homebound instruction is not expected to completely replicate the educational program available at school. The instruction does need to be provided by a licensed teacher.

9. *Are requests for homebound instruction for school age parents addressed differently?*

Yes. Districts are required to provide educational services for school age parents to enable them to continue and complete their education. Homebound instruction can be requested for these students and it must be considered under the school age parent program. However, as in other requests for homebound instruction, the district is not obligated to provide the homebound instruction simply because a student, parent, physician, or other provider requests it. Please see Information Update 99.08 for more information.

10. *How are parents/guardians notified of these provisions?*

Wisconsin Statute 118.15 (1)(f) requires school districts to notify students, parents, and guardians at the beginning of each school year of their opportunity to request modifications in their or their child's program. A request for homebound instruction is only one example of these provisions.

11. *How is homebound instruction different from home schooling?*

In a home-based private education program, or “home schooling,” the parents or guardians take responsibility for providing their child’s education. These parents must submit a registration form to DPI in order to meet their obligation under compulsory attendance. Homebound instruction, when it is provided, is provided by the school district of residence.

12. *If a parent requests homebound instruction and is denied, can they enroll their child in home based private education?*

A parent always has that right; however, it is not required in order to meet their obligation under compulsory attendance in this instance (see question 7.)

For further information or questions, contact Nic Dibble, Consultant, School Social Work Services, at (608) 266-0963 or [nic.dibble@dpi.state.wi.us](mailto:nic.dibble@dpi.state.wi.us) . This document is also available for downloading at [www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sspw/homebound.html](http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sspw/homebound.html).

This document is meant to provide guidance to school districts regarding homebound instruction. It is not meant to substitute for legal advice. Please consult your attorney for assistance in individual cases.

The reference used in writing this document is Wisconsin Statute 118.15, Compulsory Attendance. Copies of this statute are available at the State of Wisconsin legislative Web site at [www.legis.state.wi.us](http://www.legis.state.wi.us) or at any public library.